

## Commissioner's Weekly Wrap Up

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DCS Communications Office

**June 18, 2004**

### **This Week In Central Office**

#### Monday, June 14

Commissioner Miller attended the Governor's Children's Cabinet meeting in Nashville. Miller was present for the announcement of the establishment of the [Governor's Office of Children's Care](#) and the appointment of its director, Manny Martins. This office will operate in the Governor's office and will coordinate the wide range of services and supports available to children through state departments and the private sector. The Governor has directed that the office's initial focus will be on the delivery of healthcare services to children.

#### Wednesday, June 16

Commissioner Miller attended and addressed the Annual Children's Caucus at the State Capitol Building in Nashville.

### **The Week Ahead**

#### Wednesday, June 23

Commissioner Miller will hold a central office "regional training" at the Cordell Hull building in Nashville.

Staff Contact: [Carla.aaron@state.tn.us](mailto:Carla.aaron@state.tn.us)

#### Friday, June 25

Commissioner Miller and Executive Director for Juvenile Justice Programs Ken Stevenson will attend the Mountain View Youth Development Center 2004 Graduation Ceremony in Jefferson Co. Miller will then travel to the West view Center in Knoxville for a facility tour and visit.

### **Sick Leave Bank Membership Termination**

Any employee currently a member of the Sick Leave Bank may withdraw their membership by submitting a written notarized statement to the SLB Board of Trustees requesting cancellation. The notarized statement is to be submitted through your personnel officer to be forwarded to this office no later than **June 25, 2004**. The statement will then be forwarded to the Administrators of the Sick Leave Bank. Termination of membership will be effective June 30, 2004.

If you do not elect to withdraw membership by June 30, 2004 you may be assessed one day of sick leave on October 1, 2004, if the Sick Leave Bank Board of Trustees does not waive the assessment.



If you have any questions regarding the Sick Leave Bank, please contact your appropriate personnel contact person.

## Reminder: Submit Your Ideas for the Summer Trim Down

Do you crave more time to do good quality work and wish to be rid of the hassles of unnecessary procedures and paperwork? Do you believe there are areas within our agency that we could "trim down" the process? If you answered yes, then put on your thinking cap. We need your help!

Senior management needs your assistance in identifying forms, policies, and procedures that you believe do not add any value to your work, and could possibly be abolished. Everything is open for consideration; however, items that are mandated by a federal statute, a state statute or a consent decree obviously cannot be included in this effort.



Email your suggestions to [DCS.Challenge@state.tn.us](mailto:DCS.Challenge@state.tn.us) and please be as specific as possible in referencing the policy or procedure you wish to be considered in this "trim down". Submit your ideas and suggestions as soon as possible, however they need to be received by the **close of business on June 30th.**

## FIRST LADY ASSISTS IN CONSTRUCTION OF "DREAM HOUSE"

First Lady Andrea Conte visited the Nashville Child Advocacy Center on Wednesday, June 16, to participate in the construction of a "Dream House" for the children who are served by the center each year.

The Dream House concept is a creation of Mr. Charlie Allen, pictured in foreground, of Nashville. In 1973, Allen designed the inexpensive, walk-in playhouse to allow children to create any imaginary setting and has continued to seek partnerships with local not-for-profit agencies for the past 20 years.



First Lady Andrea Conte and Charlie Allen construct a Dream House" for the Nashville Child Advocacy Center.

Other attendees pictured below include CAC Clinical Director Frankie Cowan, Nashville CAC Director June Turner, CAC Family Advocate Susan Bell, and DCS Case Manager/ Davidson Co. Sex Abuse Unit Ed Stotts.



For more information on this Dream House project or for additional information about other Office of the First Lady projects and events, please visit [www.state.tn.us/firstlady](http://www.state.tn.us/firstlady)

## *From the Desk of Viola Miller:*

### *Four Basic Principles of Professional Behavior*

I continually focus on, and ask you to focus on, four basic principles of professional behavior:

1. Preserve the integrity of others
2. Practice active listening
3. Involve others in problem solving
4. Take responsibility for your own behavior

A complaint from Tennessee Justice Center this week reinforced the importance of these principles. The complaint also reminded me of how very important it is to remember that we are the professionals and that the people with whom we work are very vulnerable often stressed, frustrated and anxious. We cannot forget how important it is for us to consistently practice these four basic principles.

Here's a story: A parent of one of our children complained to Tennessee Justice Center that a DCS case manager had "threatened" him with putting his child at a YDC for filing an appeal with TNCare regarding placement of his son in a sexual abuse treatment program.

As is my practice, I asked the Regional Administrator to investigate this complaint and advise me, and the RA did a very thorough job. The RA and I are convinced that the case manager was attempting to present alternatives, not threaten compliance.

Do I think the parent was lying? Absolutely not. I believe he was stressed and anxious about his son's well being and his ability to maintain contact with that son.

We are good enough and confident enough to learn two very important lessons from this complaint:

1. We must always remain aware of how very vulnerable our families are...how very important it is that we preserve their integrity, practice active listening, and engage them in problem solving. They are anxious, stressed and often frustrated. We cannot be too careful in how we communicate with them. We're the professionals.
2. When this kind of misunderstanding occurs it's our responsibility to make it right. I am very proud that, even before I suggested it, the case manager involved had determined to contact the parent and apologize for the misunderstanding.

That's our professional responsibility - to constantly practice active listening even when the information comes as a complaint.

It's our job to respond to the feelings of our families, even when they complain about us. **We must always remember that we are the change agents.** Our families are vulnerable and may not always hear what we intend to communicate. **We have the responsibility to those four basic principles of professional behavior.**

My thanks go to the RA and this case manager for their response. They were not defensive nor did they try to shift the blame. They simply recognized that we had a problem and we needed to try to fix it.

Our families are not easy. There have major dysfunctions and vulnerabilities or we would not be involved in the first place. **We are the professionals who must remember these principles. We must take responsibility and respond to families in ways that help and support them toward better health and well-being.**



## Dropping a Line

*Note: The following is a summary of an e-mail Commissioner Miller received on June 16 commending Robertson Co. DCS staff on their exceptional teamwork and partnership!*

### **Robertson County DCS helps Youth Director turn a Vision into a Reality**

Brent Coley, Youth Program Director of Tennessee Turning Point, a faith-based, non-profit organization recently sent Commissioner Miller an e-mail telling her of how grateful he was to receive the services of the exemplary Robertson County DCS staff, and their willingness to help him succeed in his mission.

On May 13, while waiting for his Juvenile Court case to begin Coley heard Judge Max Fagan say in reference to the many Robertson County DCS foster children, "We will have to put them somewhere." Unaware of the vacuum of Resource homes in the Robertson County area, Coley later approached Judge Fagan to express his concern. Fagan and his assistant proceeded to tell Coley that 60 percent of Robertson County children are placed in other counties and the need for Resource homes in the community.

Coley immediately took on this burden and decided to acquire the help of the Robertson County DCS. There he spoke with Rodney Compton, a Foster Parent Support Case Manager in Robertson County.

Working together, they had received 17 applications for Resource homes and held their first P.A.T.H. meeting with 17 families in attendance within just three weeks. Compton and Kim Moore, the Team Coordinator for Robertson and Cheatham Counties, then started expedited P.A.T.H. classes to be completed on June 17. **And now the best part: There are currently 31 new families willing to open their homes to foster children.**

"Our goal is to increase the Resource homes in Robertson County by 50 percent by August 1 and to increase the homes by 100 percent by December 1," Coley said.

*Coley was especially complimentary of the services of Rodney Compton and Martha Blankenship who conducted the Saturday, June 12 P.A.T.H. classes. His e-mail commended the Commissioner and the entire Robertson County DCS staff on their diligent teamwork and commitment to Tennessee's foster children.*



Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities no doubt crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; begin it well and serenely and with too high a spirit to be cumbered with your old nonsense.

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

### **Funny Medical Quotes!**

*The following quotes were taken from actual medical records as dictated by physicians...*

By the time he was admitted, his rapid heart had stopped, and he was feeling better.

Patient has chest pain if she lies on her left side for over a year.

On the second day the knee was better and on the third day it had completely disappeared.

The patient has been depressed ever since she began seeing me in 1983.

Patient was released to outpatient department without dressing.

I have suggested that she loosen her pants before standing, and then, when she stands with the help of someone, they should fall to the floor.

The patient will need disposition, and therefore we will get Dr. Blank to dispose of him.

The patient refused an autopsy.

The patient expired on the floor uneventfully.

Patient has left his white blood cells at another hospital.

The patient's past medical history has been remarkably insignificant with only a 40-pound weight gain in the past three days.

The patient left the hospital feeling much better except for her original complaints.

The patient was in his usual state of good health until his airplane ran out of gas and crashed.

She is numb from her toes down.

Occasional, constant, infrequent headaches.

Patient was alert and unresponsive.

When she fainted, her eyes rolled around the room.

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